

—Slug:.....COMM-0872.opin.letter.000_belknap
—Contributor..... Timothy Belknap
—Contributor email.....tbbrattle@gmail.com
—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format..... LETTERS - Opinions - Letters to the Editor
—Dateline.....Brattleboro
—Article Number:.....43862

Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

Every registered voter should have an equal voice

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

####END SUBHED####

TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

The Charter Revision Commission is proposing a 60%
supermajority requirement to reject a budget by Australian ballot.
The stated goal is to encourage attendance at open Town
Meeting.

But this proposal would do the opposite of what
democracy should do — it would make it harder for the people
as a whole to overrule the decisions of a small minority.

11 Open Town Meeting is a valued tradition, but it is not
12 equally accessible. A meeting that can last 10 to 12 hours
13 excludes many residents: seniors, people with disabilities,
14 caregivers, parents, and hourly workers who simply cannot spend
15 an entire day.

16 Last March, roughly 300 residents attended open Town
17 Meeting and made decisions affecting a town with approximately
18 9,200 registered voters. That's about 3% of the electorate.

19 The proposed charter change would give those decisions
20 extraordinary protection. Instead of allowing a simple majority of
21 town-wide voters to reject a budget, it would require a 60%
22 supermajority. In other words, a budget approved by a few
23 hundred meeting attendees could remain in effect even if a
24 majority of voters opposed it.

25 That would create two classes of voters: those able to
26 attend Town Meeting, whose decisions stand unless overturned
27 by an unusually high threshold, and everyone else, whose votes
28 would count only if they can assemble a supermajority.

29 If the goal is to strengthen open Town Meeting, the
30 answer is to make participation more accessible — not to make
31 the Australian ballot less meaningful.

32 Every registered voter should have an equal voice.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

33

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

34

0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

35

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

36

####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

37

####END LOGLINE####